

CRB-00115-77

19 December 1977

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. [REDACTED]
Executive Director, Strategic Services Unit

SUBJECT: State Department Files Released to the National Archives

REFERENCE: a. CRB-00106/77, 4 August 1977
b. [REDACTED], 1 June 1977

1. On 8 December 1977 a meeting was held with Mr. Edwin A. Thompson, Chief of the Declassification Branch at National Archives, which was attended by Mr. [REDACTED] and the writer. Based on the briefing at this session which dealt with the potentially embarrassing and security compromising aspects of the State Department Purport Books, a meeting was held on 9 December 1977 with Mr. Jack Pruden, Chief, Foreign Affairs, Document and Reference Section at the Department of State, Mr. Frank Macheck, Mr. John Glennen, and Dr. Kuggan. Agency representatives included Mr. [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] from DDA/ISAS/RRB, and the undersigned. A third meeting was held on 13 December with Dr. Milton O. Gustaffson, Chief of the Diplomatic Affairs Section at the National Archives, and attended by Messrs. [REDACTED] from the Agency. Mr. [REDACTED] did not attend either of the last two mentioned meetings but was separately conducting a survey of the actual files to ascertain the scope of the problem and any obvious course of remedial action which might be available.

2. Attached is a copy of the survey report by [REDACTED] and, while lengthy, it does represent a relatively comprehensive review of the situation and the problem. The problem, as you are aware from earlier briefings, concerns the fact that the purport book entries are taken from classified documents. The purport books were never classified and have been in the public domain since 1958. An experienced researcher could use the purport files to uncover and identify sensitive information dealing with OSS cover, deep cover personnel, agents, etc.

3. There are three alternative courses of action outlined on page 5 of the attached survey. Your approval is requested to ask DDA/ISAS/RRB to request National Archives to place a temporary hold on the appropriate purport books and withdraw the corresponding microfilm

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until the offending entries have been reviewed and sanitized by a two man task force. This course of action, listed as option 2 in the attached survey, has been previously discussed with Mr. [] who believes that National Archives probably will be amenable to this request. Should NARS refuse, we would have to fall back to option 1 listed on page 5 of the attached survey.

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4. Recommendation for the handling of the 1945-1949 State index cards held by NARS will be the subject of a separate memorandum.

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APPROVED:

/s/

(4 Jan 78)

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SUBJECT: A Survey of the Purport Book System used by the Department of State from 1910 through June 1944

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The following comments are based on a survey made by [] at the request of C/ISS/PIAG/CRB. The survey was conducted at the National Archives at the request of C/ISS/PIAG/CRB and included oral briefings by appropriate National Archives officials as well as a selective but objective sampling of the purport books. The comments which follow identify the system, the problem and possible alternatives.

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PURPORT SHEETS (attachment A)

The purport sheets (literally meaning that the entry "purports" or summarizes that which is contained in the original) are in bound volumes for the period 1910 through June of 1944. At that time State changed the system and 3 x 5 index cards were used instead of the purport sheet entries. When the microfilming of the purport books was done, the time period for the files including the July-December 1944 period - thus, a small portion of the 3 x 5 index cards has also been placed on microfilm.

The purport book consists of approximately 3⁶ to 400 sheets filed (bound) in hard cover books (ledgers) according to the Dept. of State filing criteria. Files 103.918 and 103.91802, which contain the majority of purport entries in question, have the title of "COI" or "COI-055," or "OSS," or "OSS-Agents" on the top of each sheet, so OSS interest/connection is explicit. In other file categories, documents of interest to OSS are identifiable, not by the title page of the sheet (or file), but by entry of "OSS" in left hand "From" column, showing the document was originated by OSS.

These two files (103.918 and 103.91802) contain the great majority of purport sheets or entries of interest to OSS (probably more than 85% excluding the 123 personnel index files). Each purport sheet contains an average of 10-12 entries, each line entry containing originating agency or post, recipient installation, date, the purport entry and a line entry number. There are approximately 450 purport sheets in these two files.

Purport Sheets not the Only "Finding Aid" heading to OSS Documents

State entered all documents onto purport sheets and in addition had a cross-indexing 3 x 5 card system which could lead to these documents. Documents are carded by originating office, sending or receiving installation. Each document will have a minimum of one cross reference index card, two if both OSS as originating office and receiving installation

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are carded, and additional possible cards for names and subject categories. Thus, if action is taken to sanitize a purport entry, parallel action must be taken with the related cards.

Content of Purport Sheet Entries

Code names or designators, with gist of message; usually non-sensitive

True names of OSS staff personnel, non-sensitive

True names of persons under cover, both official and non-official

[redacted] sometimes purport entry names cover, sometimes not.

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Cover designations without mentioning persons names, e.g.

[redacted]

True names of American and non-American agents, contacts, or targets with reflection of "make payment to," "pass message to," "investigate."

Financial transactions for stations (or chiefs), individuals under official cover, individuals under non-official cover. You usually can't tell whether person is under official or non-official cover, but an experienced reader can often tell from personal knowledge. An outsider could not tell unless particularly knowledgeable.

There may be additional categories or types of entries, since only a limited number were sampled, but the above items are believed to cover the majority of the types. It is clear from the above that there exists a concrete breach, or potential breach of classification.

CIA REVIEW

CIA has reviewed (done by [redacted] in September 1975) the documents in the 103.918 and 103.91802 series and has certified appropriate documents for retention of classification. CIA has also reviewed many other docs, originated by OSS but listed on purport sheets for files not exclusively of OSS origin. NARS has probably identified all or most all of the possible OSS documents.

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With reference only to samples taken from the 103.918 and 103.91802 series:

- a. In some instances the purport entry contains the essence of what CIA wanted protected.

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- b. In some instances, the purport entry does not contain sensitive information other than a name (N.B. This entire file (103 series) is explicitly of OSS interest.)
- c. In other instances there is nothing sensitive in the purport entry for a document CIA wanted withheld.
- d. There are purport entries which appear (to this reviewer) to be sensitive which CIA did not withhold. In doing a very limited number of checks on the documents for these entries I found that three documents were not on file (presumably missing when file forwarded to NARS by State) and therefore not reviewed by CIA. A fourth document, not withheld, was identical to one which was withheld. It is not possible to make any accurate estimate of the number of documents referred to in the purport sheets which are not retrievable in the files other than to say there are "many" such. The significance, if any, is that should we ever undertake an entry by entry review of purport sheets, we might withhold entries referring to documents NARS does not have and would theoretically be retrieved only by follow-up reference to State.

Past Accessibility of Purport Notebooks and Related Documents

These notebooks have been on the shelves available to the public since 1958. NARS says some 23,000 plus persons have been in the area where the purport ledgers for the 1940-44 period are held but there is no way in which NARS can reconstitute any statistics on who/how many may actually looked at the purport ledgers.

The original documents were not reviewed by CIA until September 1975. NARS says it has no way of retrieving information as to whether anybody ever requested any documents from this holding. According to informal memory and hunch NARS opines very few if any requests have been made. The intent of the following paragraph is to address at least partially the difference between theoretical/hypothetical breach of classification and actual breach as best can be determined. It also relates to the potential "embarrassment" factor (see below) should we at a future date refuse declassification of a document, the sensitive essence of which has already been revealed to a requestor who has seen the purport entry.

Problems Relating to Existence of Purport

As stated, the purport files have been available to the public for 17-18 years. Therefore a potential has existed that some researcher has seen a purport entry which we would under normal circumstances have "classified." It is highly probable this has not happened often, unless

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someone has devined the "giveaway" of the purport entries and has abstracted a lot of information without intent to request the associated documents. While a pragmatic judgement can be made that the likelihood of such a happening is very remote, it also follows that there is nothing anyone can do about it at this time anyway. If there is some sort of "hold" or "close" put upon these sheets, we then face a potential embarrassment feature. Someone presumably in the fairly recent past has seen a purport entry, has not yet requested the relevant document (assuming he eventually intends to request it), will eventually request the document which we might refuse him on the grounds of its sensitivity with reference to "sources and methods," the essence of which is already in his possession, having gleaved them from the purport entry. Can we not presume that anyone truly interested in the documents would have requested them within the last 3-6 months? If not, they possess "classified information" but presumably do not intend to do anything about it or do not know what they possess. The risk or damage factor appears very low.

Sub Problem Relating to Microfilm

The entirety of the purport sheets and index cards for the 1940-1944 period are on microfilm and have been available for about a year. They have been advertised publically in an interim NARS publication notice (Attachment B) and will be included in the updated catalog of NARS publication scheduled to go to press the end of this year (1977). While NARS can not retrieve whether anyone has to date purchased this microfilm, the odds are that very few copies have been purchased. I understand it would be possible to put a "hold" on that portion of the microfilm which relates to the two major files of most interest to OSS, 103.918 and 103.91802 (the 123 files are about the same size and a hold would also have to be placed on them). It is conceivable we could put them on permanent hold or at least sanitize the film. As to that portion of the film which contains only a smattering of OSS documents, it appears this would offer an "acceptable degree of risk" not to worry about it since the documents described are mostly if not exclusively on intelligence matters and do not contain compromising, operational and personnel information found in 103.918, 103.91802 and 123. On the basis of a brief sampling of these intermittent entries the only sensitive aspect of purport entries noted was wording which would permit an inference that the reports may have been based on intercept material.

Possible Alternatives for CIA Action

There are three general courses of action we might take:

1. Do nothing, on the theory that the purport sheets have been in public domain since 1958 and the information is 30-35 years old anyway. Let the microfilm go as is. Call the risk acceptable

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of revealing a very few names of non-American contacts or agents and a few cover mechanisms. Try to work out a mechanism for reviewing the purport entry anytime in the future any document from this collection is requested and we are considering withholding it. The advantage of this alternative is the savings in manpower expenditure for both CIA and NARS. The disadvantage is the risk, the degree of which is very hard to assess, of a continuing potential for disclosure of sensitive OSS activities.

2. Put a temporary hold on the purport sheets and withdraw the microfilm. Have a CIA task force (probably 2 people) sanitize the purport sheets in a manner satisfactory to both NARS and CIA. NARS could then re-microfilm the sanitized file of purport sheets. NARS and CIA would have to work out a method of purging the 3 x 5 index cross reference card files. The advantage of this alternative is that security would be preserved. The disadvantage is the cost, but it would not be as much as a first glance might suggest. As a very general estimate, the review of the 918 series entries would cover 450 purport sheets, or about 4500 entries and would require the sanitization of around 300 entries. Two persons could complete the task in two to three weeks (review of the 123 index files are not included in this estimate and will probably double this estimate). The actual physical sanitization of the file (masking out or razor blade clip), the re-microfilming of the 450 pages, and the purging of the related 3 x 5 index cards would presumably be a NARS responsibility.

3. A third alternative lies somewhere between the first two. Ask NARS to put the purport sheets on permanent "withhold" and withdraw the microfilm, but do little more. This has the advantage of being time-saving while removing the two major bulk sources of potential compromise. The disadvantages are that we would be asking NARS to go against its own procedures; we would be withholding finding aids to material we are probably perfectly willing to release; and, access is still possible via the card files. I personally discount this alternative as sloppy and bureaucratically cumbersome.

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